United Nations E/CN.6/2002/NGO/1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 January 2002

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-sixth session
4-15 March 2002
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2002/1.

02-22322 (E) 280102

ECONOMIC GLOBALISATION

Soroptimist International recognises that the rapid rise of economic globalisation has created new economic, social and political challenges, especially for women. Aspects of globalisation have potential for positive advances. However, they present equal potential for increased social and economic division and transnational crime. They threaten the ability of nations to ensure that development is both economically and environmentally sustainable and have contributed to the widening gap between rich and poor nations and between the rich and poor within nations. New mechanisms are needed to ensure that benefits are shared more equitably and that negative impacts on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups — especially women, children and the poor — are recognised and redressed.

Soroptimist International urges recognition that economic policies driven entirely by the concept of a free market and trade liberalization can result in:

- increased reliance of developing countries on imports, with resulting trade imbalances that increase their debt and poverty levels
- export-driven domestic production in developing countries, with cash crops replacing local food crops and less sustainable agricultural practices
- exploitation of resources — both human and natural — for the benefit of foreign agencies, with little or no commitment to the ongoing health of the local society or environment
- increased unemployment, as workers are displaced from local industries unable to compete in a globalised marketplace, with women often the first to lose their jobs
- increased social disruption, as local knowledge and practice are devalued in favour of technology-based methods
- industrial and corporate practices that place some workers, especially women, in unregulated, unprotected and underpaid working conditions
- financial volatility and economic crisis, resulting from speculative and uncontrolled capital flow

Soroptimist International therefore urges international organisations and financial institutions, including transnational companies, to:

- include explicitly in their policies, measures which address human rights and adhere to internationally accepted United Nations Conventions
- consider cancellation of crippling debt in the poorest of countries
- avoid imposition of structural adjustment policies (SAPs) that result in reduced education and health funding in indebted nations
- assist developing countries to compete globally and to introduce poverty reduction programmes

- continue interactive dialogue with civil society in establishing development policy

Soroptimist International urges governments to:

- co-operate in establishing systems to counteract the negative impacts of economic globalisation upon women and children
- develop policies that encourage the equitable participation of women in economic activity and decision-making
- consider alternative economic models, which place value on national assets and human resources, not just monetary policy and increased annual Gross National Product (GNP)
- consider introducing taxes on large-scale currency exchanges (Tobin Tax)
- work to establish infrastructure and education programmes that ensure equitable access to advances in digital information and communication technology, which will ensure the broadest possible participation in the new knowledge-based, global economy.

Soroptimist International supports co-operation between governments, civil society and the global private sector, which recognises that both the new global economy and society must be underpinned by concerns for the environment and for labour and human rights, as much as by market forces. Soroptimist International encourages its members to be thoughtful consumers, identifying and avoiding investment in and purchases from, companies failing to adhere to accepted international standards. It will continue to work with other agencies to establish education and training programmes and micro-enterprises specifically for women and will support programmes that enhance the economic independence of those most disadvantaged by current social and economic policies.

United Nations E/CN.6/2002/NGO/2

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by HelpAge International, International Alliance of Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, and Soroptimist International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Associated Country Women of the World, Centre for Women, the Earth, the Divine, European Women's Lobby, International Federation of University Women, Italian Centre of Solidarity, National Council of German Women's Organizations, Pax Romana, Salvation Army, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Socialist International Women, and Women's International Zionist Organization, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and European Union of Women and International Association for Counselling, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2002/1.

02-22328 (E) 290102

We, the above-named international non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, welcome the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to focus at its 46th session on women, poverty and the environment.

Eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalising world.

Eradicating poverty means giving people the right to and providing them with work, food, shelter, education and health care, it also means the right to ownership and control of property. It means empowering the powerless. Millions of people on this planet are denied these basic rights, the overwhelming majority of them being women.

From the earliest stages of their life cycle, many women are marked by poverty. Poverty and marginalisation create conditions for increasing violence against women and children. In situations of abject poverty, girls get less food than boys, less or no health care when sick, less or no education. Girls and young women often are forced to seek employment abroad, usually recruited as domestic or service industry workers. Many of them find themselves sold as sex workers or slaves. Old women, left behind, must raise the children, maintain family and community life and cannot enjoy rest and being cared for.

Following the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, most countries formulated Poverty Reduction Strategies and Poverty Eradication Plans. Although women were specifically targetted, implementation of the Plans and Strategies has rarely reached them and their situation has remained largely the same.

The Social Summit +5 held in June 2000 to review and appraise progress achieved since 1995, found that in many countries both in the South and North, the number of people living in poverty has actually increased. The goal of the review, to halve the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015 cannot be achieved unless the majority of these people, women, are empowered and have their voices heard.

We firmly believe that women's groups and women's organisations must work closely with governments and their institutions, the private sector and civil society to ensure that progress in human development and environmental sustainability are not cast aside in favour of economic growth and trade liberalisation. We firmly believe that women must be actively involved in mitigating the adverse effects of globalisation and must seize the opportunities offered by globalisation.

Sound policies at the macro-economic level cannot be translated into economic growth without parallel micro-economic policy support. It is important to listen to and closely

cooperate with women of all ages in order to find common solutions. Women's issues must take centre stage if positive change is to occur.

We therefore urge Member States

- to seek links and cooperate closely with local women's NGOs and organisations to change and modify any cultural impediments to empowering women;

- to implement those plans and strategies which target girls, women and older women and guarantee adequate food, education, health care training, work and professional opportunities for them;

- to make sure that women are able to actively involve themselves in olitical and economic decision-making, from the local to the global level;

- to ensure that women take an active part in shaping and monitoring development policies by mainstreaming women's perspective in development.